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REMARKS

Claims 5, 6, 18-20, as amended, and new claims 27 and 28 are before the Examiner for consideration.

Claims 1-4, 7-17 and 21-24 have been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer. Non-elected claims 25 and 26 also have been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer to applicants' rights to claim such subject matter in a continuing application.

Claims 5, 6, and 18-20 have been edited to make applicants' invention more clear to the reader. Claim 6 now states that the belt includes widthwise portions extending normal to a lengthwise direction length of the belt, each widthwise portion having an intermediate portion with a thickness portion and at least one void in the thickness portion, the void being located at a regular interval of distance in the lengthwise direction of the belt, wherein the at least one void provides elasticity to the belt. See applicants' specification, paragraphs 0121-0133, and the embodiment shown in Figs. 4A-9B, for support of these features.

Claim 18 has been amended to recite that the plurality of wires extend in a widthwise direction of the belt. See

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applicants' specification, paragraphs 0169-0179 and the embodiment shown in Figs. 20-23 for support of this embodiment.

Claims 27 and 28 have been added. Applicants' specification, paragraphs 0169-0179 supports this subject matter also.

1. Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to provide an initialed copy of PTO Form 1449 indicating receipt and consideration of the references accompanying Information Disclosure Statements filed April 11, 2002, July 8, 2002, and December 8, 2003.

2. Acknowledgement of applicants' claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. §119, and confirmation of receipt of a copy of certified copies of all priority documents filed April 11, 2002, is respectfully requested also.

3. The finality of the restriction requirement is acknowledged. As noted above, the non-elected claims have been cancelled.

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4. Claims 1-9 and 19 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Pinto et al. U.S. Patent 4,681,646. Claims 1-4 and 7-9 have been cancelled, thereby mooting their rejection. Claims 5, 6, and 19 patentably define over the reference.

The stretchable conveyor belt recited in independent claim 5 includes an intermediate portion having a thickness portion, a width extending normal to a lengthwise direction of the belt and having widthwise opposite ends, and at least one void in the thickness portion, each at least one void gradually widening in at least one direction toward at least one of the widthwise opposite ends, and wherein each at least one void is for imparting elasticity to the belt. This arrangement is nowhere disclosed or suggested in the cited reference.

Pinto '646 is said to disclose elastomeric body element 10 and two reinforcing members 11 including twisted or braided cords that are fully embedded longitudinally in body 10, the belt having a plurality of recesses located at regular intervals in a lengthwise direction, and each extending in a widthwise direction. However, Pinto '646 does not disclose or suggest a belt having at least one void in the thickness portion, each at

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least one void gradually widening in at least one direction toward at least one of the widthwise opposite ends, and wherein each at least one void is for imparting elasticity to the belt, as recited in applicants' claim 5.

The stretchable conveyor belt of claim 6 includes at least one pair of first and second flexible reinforcing threads that extend in the lengthwise direction of the belt, and which include a plurality of first curved or bent portions and a plurality of second curved or bent portions, respectively, in the lengthwise direction, such that the first curved or bent portions and the second curved or bent portions have opposite phases, respectively, and are wrapped around the voids. This arrangement is nowhere disclosed or suggested in the cited reference.

The Examiner asserts that Pinto '646 shows a belt having a plurality of transverse recesses and two reinforcing elements 11 that extend in a lengthwise direction of the belt. However, Pinto '646 does not disclose or suggest a plurality of first curved or bent portions and a plurality of second curved or bent portions, respectively, in the lengthwise direction, such that

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the first curved or bent portions and the second curved or bent portions have opposite phases, respectively, and are wrapped around the voids, as recited in applicants' claim 6.

The stretchable conveyor belt of claim 19, which depends from claim 18, includes widthwise portions extending normal to a lengthwise direction of the belt for support by respective rollers, each widthwise portion comprising an intermediate portion having a thickness portion and at least one void in the thickness portion, wherein each of the at least one void is for imparting elasticity to each of the widthwise portions of the belt. The belt further includes a plurality of wires that extend in a widthwise direction of the belt and include at least one layer on at least a first side of the at least one void of each of the widthwise portions of the belt, wherein the wires are for imparting transverse rigidity to the belt. This arrangement also is nowhere disclosed or suggested in the cited reference.

Pinto '646 is said to show elastomeric body element 10 and two reinforcing members 11 comprising twisted or braided cords that are fully embedded longitudinally in body 10, the belt

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having a plurality of recesses located at regular intervals in a lengthwise direction, and each extending in a widthwise direction. However, Pinto '646 does not disclose or suggest a belt having (1) a plurality of wires that extend in a widthwise direction of the belt, and (2) at least one layer on at least a first side of the at least one void of each of the widthwise portions of the belt, wherein the wires are for imparting transverse rigidity to the belt, as recited in applicants' claim 18, from which claim 19 depends.

For the foregoing reasons, Pinto '646 contains no teaching, suggestion, reason, motivation or incentive that would have led one of ordinary skill in the art to applicants' claimed invention. Nor is there any disclosure or teaching in Pinto '646 that would have suggested the desirability of modifying any portions thereof to suggest applicants' presently claimed invention. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection are respectfully requested.

5. Claims 10-18 and 20-22 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Pinto '646 and Habegger 4,184,589. Claims 10-17,

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21, and 22 have been cancelled thereby mooting their rejection. The claims as amended are patentable as explained below.

Claim 18 calls for a stretchable conveyor belt that includes widthwise portions extending normal to a lengthwise direction of the belt for support by respective rollers, each widthwise portion comprising an intermediate portion having a thickness portion and at least one void in the thickness portion, wherein each of the at least one void is for imparting elasticity to each of the widthwise portions of the belt. The belt further includes a plurality of wires that extend in a widthwise direction of the belt and comprise at least one layer on at least a first side of the at least one void of each of the widthwise portions of the belt, wherein the wires are for imparting transverse rigidity to the belt. The stretchable conveyor belt of claim 20, which depends from claim 18, includes a widthwise central portion of the belt comprising rubber and being elastic. These arrangements are nowhere disclosed or suggested in the cited references.

Pinto '646 is acknowledged by the Examiner not to disclose a tension wire; Habegger '589 is cited as allegedly teaching

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same. However, Habegger '589 does not overcome the deficiencies of Pinto '646 explained above.

For the foregoing reasons, neither Pinto '646 nor Habegger '589 contains any teaching, suggestion, reason, motivation or incentive that would have led one of ordinary skill in the art to applicants' claimed invention. Nor is there any disclosure or teaching in either of these references that would have suggested the desirability of combining any portions thereof effectively to suggest applicants' presently claimed invention. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection are respectfully requested.

6. Claims 23 and 24 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Pinto '646 and Harston U.S. Patent 5,038,919. Claims 23 and 24 have been cancelled, thereby mooting their rejection.

All claims 5, 6, 18-20, 27 and 28 are now proper in form and patentably distinguish over all grounds of rejection stated in the Office Action. Accordingly, allowance of all claims 5, 6, 18-20, 27 and 28 is respectfully requested.

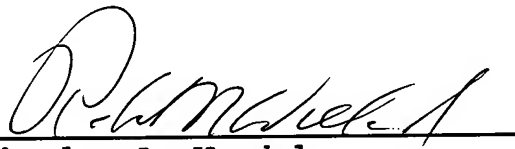
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Should the Examiner deem that any further action by the applicants would be desirable to place this application in even better condition for issue, the Examiner is requested to telephone applicants' undersigned representatives.

Respectfully submitted,

PARKHURST & WENDEL, L.L.P.

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Date


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